

The Josemaría Escriva Study Center Turns 30

The Josemaría Escrivá Research Center (CEJE), which celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in October, is entering a period of expansion and renewal.

Founded in the 1990s as a bibliographic repository on Josemaría Escrivá and Opus Dei, it now combines documentation, research, and outreach with an increasingly international scope.

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In October 2025, the Josemaría Escrivá Study Center (Centro de Estudios Josemaría Escrivá, or CEJE) celebrated its 30th anniversary, just ahead of the centenary of Opus Dei. It began as a comprehensive bibliographic collection of publications about Josemaría Escrivá, Opus Dei, and its members, and has since grown into a space that brings together bibliographic documentation, research, and outreach.

Today, led by Santiago Martínez, the Center is looking toward a more global, digital future. Since its inception, the CEJE has tried to adopt new tools and strategies to reach broader audiences and diversify its lines of work. In this interview, Martínez explains how research

approaches have evolved, the challenges of studying an institution with an international presence, and the projects that will shape the Center in the coming years.

How did the Josemaría Escrivá Research Center (CEJE) begin?

The current CEJE, originally called the “Josemaría Escrivá Documentation Center,” was founded on the initiative of Javier Hervada (1934-2020), professor of Canon Law at the University of Navarre. After Josemaría Escrivá’s beatification in 1992, Hervada sent the university’s rectorate a proposal for the creation of a center dedicated to Escrivá and the institution he founded. The idea was to gather and preserve the bibliography published about Opus Dei and its founder, in different

languages and countries. That proposal led to the establishment of the Center and the acquisition of numerous works on both subjects.

What were the most important milestones in CEJE's history? Which projects marked turning points for the Center?

The history of the CEJE can be summed up in three main areas: documentation, research, and outreach. The first phase began with the creation of a bibliographic collection housed in the University of Navarre library. It was the 1990s, in the pre-Internet era, when consulting books and academic journals in university libraries was essential for researchers.

The second key moment came in 2010, when the Center — which had been renamed the “*Josemaría Escrivá Documentation and Research Center*” — began its own research

activity, broadening the Center's mission from preserving bibliography (books, not archives) to also producing original studies on the history of Opus Dei and its founder.

The third milestone took place between 2022 and 2023, when the Center formally added outreach as a new line of work. This has made it possible to share our research, including bibliography on the history of Opus Dei accumulated over decades, with wider audiences.

Has your historiographical approach changed over the last three decades?

Thirty years is roughly the span of a generation. At CEJE today, two generations of researchers work side by side: some of us are around fifty, others closer to thirty. Each generation brings its own questions and answers.

Rather than changing historiographical approaches, I'd say that what has changed — or rather, grown stronger — is our attention to context. Today there's a conscious effort to situate Opus Dei within the religious, cultural, academic, social, and political settings of the places where it was born and developed.

And three thematic areas that have gained prominence: the history of women in Opus Dei, biographies (because understanding individual lives helps us grasp how the message is put into practice), and studies on Opus Dei's arrival to and growth in different countries. The third area is progressing rapidly.

What would you tell people who claim that Opus Dei is a difficult subject to study from an academic perspective?

I'd say they're partly right... and partly wrong. There's an institutional

dimension of Opus Dei that is relatively accessible to researchers: its juridical configuration, its founding history, its expansion, its official documents. All of that can be studied using classical methods and with considerable clarity.

The real challenge comes when we move to the lived experience of the message in people's lives. That's where nuance of individual paths, personal and social experiences come in, and those are always harder to describe and to measure. Biographies help, but it's not a field that can be neatly defined.

There's another challenge as well: geography. Opus Dei was born in Spain, but soon spread throughout Europe, the Americas, Africa, and Asia. It became a global institution, and so its story cannot (and should not) be written from a purely Spanish point of view. We need

historians with local insight from Argentina, Chile, Nigeria, China, and Australia, who understand the contexts in which the Work has taken root from within. That's why we're fostering academic networks that allow us to build this history with voices from different parts of the world.

How has CEJE adapted to new ways of communicating? How do you try to reach a broad audience, not only specialists?

We've taken steps forward as our possibilities have allowed. I'd highlight two clear milestones. The first came in 2010 with the launch of the Virtual Library of Josemaría Escrivá and Opus Dei, created to make the existing bibliography publicly available; not just references to books and articles but, whenever possible, full texts in PDF, including many out-of-print materials. This

project is directly linked to the Center's origins and its mission to gather and share bibliographic resources.

The second major push came, as I mentioned earlier, in 2022, with the production of the podcast *Fragments of History* and the sharing of audiovisual material on social media, which allowed us to reach audiences beyond the academic sphere.

Now, in 2025, we're focusing on two new lines of work. First, developing a website dedicated to the history of Opus Dei, designed for a range of digital formats. And second, exploring the use of artificial intelligence, which offers exciting possibilities for generating original content and creating more innovative and engaging ways to access information.

CEJE is celebrating 30 years just before the centenary of Opus Dei

(2028-2030). How are you preparing for that milestone?

Enthusiastically! Our goal is to continue advancing along the three lines of work that define the Center: locating and preserving what has already been published, promoting original research, and sharing that knowledge widely.

We also want to mark this anniversary with a special project: we're preparing an exhibition on the history of Opus Dei and its impact, both within the institution and in the life of the Church and in the various countries where it has taken root over nearly a century.

How do you envision the next ten years of the CEJE?

I'd like our research and publications on the history of Opus Dei to help shape how other scholars

understand both Catholicism and this institution.

I also hope we can reach wider audiences, not only Spanish-speaking ones. We want to grow in the English- and French-speaking worlds, and begin to open paths in other widely spoken languages such as Chinese and Russian. The goal is to share life stories, reflections on the message of Opus Dei, and studies of its growth. It's a global reality that deserves a global presence. We hope CEJE will rise to that challenge.

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